

Message Text

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13

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAJ-01 DRC-01 /119 W
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R 251843Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9722

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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USCINCEUR

USNMR SHAPE

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BE

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON GOVERNMENT CRISIS

REF: BRUSSELS 468

1. SUMMARY. DELAY IN KING'S DECISION ON NEXT
STEP IN RESOLVING GOVERNMENT CRISIS APPEARS DUE
PARTICULARLY TO POLITICO-LEGALISTIC IMBROGLIO OVER
WHETHER STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN BEFORE PARLIAMENT IS
DISSOLVED, TO ENSURE THAT NEXT PARLIAMENT HAS AUTHORITY
TO MAKE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS. PRACTICAL EFFECT
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OF DELAY SUITS FLEMISH CATHOLICS AND HARASSES SOCIALISTS.

END SUMMARY.

2. OUTLOOK IS THAT KING WILL FEEL COMPELLED TO DECIDE DURING THE WEEKEND OR EARLY NEXT WEEK BETWEEN EARLY ELECTIONS OR AN ATTEMPT AT A NEW GOVERNMENT. ONE IMPORTANT STUMBLING BLOCK INHIBITING THE KING FROM PROMPTLY DISSOLVING PARLIAMENT AND OPENING THE WAY TO ELECTIONS WITHIN 40 DAYS IS THE OPPOSITION TO SUCH AN ACTION COMING FROM THE FLEMISH SOCIAL CHRISTIAN (CVP) PARTY, ACTING THROUGH VICE PREMIER TINDEMANS. THE FLEMISH CATHOLIC OBJECTIVE IS TO HAVE THE NECESSARY STEPS TAKEN BY THE CURRENT PARLIAMENT TO ENSURE THAT THE NEXT PARLIAMENT COULD ENACT CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS. THIS IS A COURSE OPPOSED BY THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PSB) AND BY THE WALLONIAN SOCIAL CHRISTIANS (PSC) BUT FAVORED BY THE VOLKSUNIE, AND THE WALLOON LINGUISTIC/FEDERALIST GROUPS (FDF/RW).

3. FDF AND RW PRESIDENTS FRANCOIS PERIN AND LEON DEFOSSET HAVE PROPOSED AMENDING ARTICLE 131 OF THE CONSTITUTION SO AS TO SIMPLIFY PROCEDURES FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS. WHILE REVISED CONDITIONS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ARE EARNESTLY DESIRED BY THE LINGUISTIC/FEDERALIST PARTIES, THE PRACTICAL EFFECTS OF RAISING THE ISSUE NOW IS TO CREATE WHAT THE BELGIAN PRESS DESCRIBES AS "IMBROGLIO AND IMPASSE" IN THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS.

4. THE KING WILL FIND IT EMBARRASSING TO DELAY HIS DECISION MUCH LONGER, BECAUSE DELAY WOULD SEEM TO ACCOMMODATE THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS AND OTHER NON-SOCIALIST GROUPS BUT FRUSTRATE THE PSB DESIRE FOR PROMPT ELECTIONS.

5. MEANWHILE, THE FRANCOPHONE LINGUISTIC GROUPS HAVE SWUNG INTO PRE-ELECTORAL PREPARATIONS WITH ZEST. THEY SEEM CONFIDENT THAT INCREASED POPULAR IMPATIENCE WITH THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES AND FRANCOPHONE CONCERNS ABOUT DISADVANTAGES FROM REGIONALIZATION, ESPECIALLY AROUND BRUSSELS, WILL STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITION IN THE NEXT ELECTION, WHENEVER IT MAY BE. STRAUZ-HUPE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTIONS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BRUSSE00518
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740117/aaaaaoyk.tel
Line Count: 107
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BRUSSELS 468
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 APR 2002 by kellew0>; APPROVED <29 MAY 2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STATUS REPORT ON GOVERNMENT CRISIS
TAGS: PINT, BE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005